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General Assembly
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Official Records

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Wednesday, 14 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 29

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/320 and Add.1 and 2)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.6)

The Acting President: I first call on Mr. Roberto Robaina Gonzalez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.6.

Mr. Robaina Gonzalez (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Blind and deaf, the United States of America continues to ignore the demands made by this Assembly for six successive years to put an end to its long, harsh and merciless economic, commercial and financial war against Cuba.

Year after year, the mandate of humanity has been as follows: in 1992, 59 votes in favour of a resolution condemning the United States blockade against Cuba and 3 against, with the remaining countries either abstaining or absent; in 1993, 88 votes in favour and 4 against; in 1994, 101 votes in favour and 2 against; in 1995, 117 votes in favour and 3 against; in 1996, 137 votes in favour and 3 against; and in 1997, 143 votes in favour and 3 against.

Each of these decisions was historic. The first resolution was adopted at a time when the triumphalist intoxication over the demise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Eastern Europe was sentencing the Cuban revolution to death, and the bets on the imminent fall of the Government in Havana were as frequent as the bags being packed and the travel being booked to attend a party of vultures that would supposedly feast on the remains and spoils of our dreams of independence and justice.

Those who never doubted us, those who feared for our fate and those who have always supported us, trusting in our will power, resolve and strength, have seen their hopes rekindled. Cuba has not only endured; Cuba and its people have managed to survive the so-called end of history and harassment by the mightiest Power of all time.

These rooms and corridors have witnessed abusive pressures, blackmail and threats to foil any Cuban proposition. Quite a few countries have lost credit facilities, seen business and trade transactions cancelled or sustained political retaliation, even for merely abstaining or choosing to be absent during the ballot.

In the midst of these realities, and in spite of repeated and almost unanimous resolutions passed by this

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General Assembly against the blockade, the infamous Helms-Burton Act was passed, as an attempt by the United States to enshrine hegemony, extraterritoriality and unilateralism in international law, and in a manner that makes a mockery of the United States allies, tramples on United States partners and humiliates other States.

This legislation has had a brutal impact on Cuba, and since its enactment it has undermined the global trading system, the negotiations for a future multilateral investment agreement and the arrangements for international trust, including trust between the centres of world economic power, to such an extent that not even the main plaintiffs representing nationalized American companies support it today.

The world, which had opposed this Act from its inception, has come to recognize that the extraterritorial nature of this law sustaining the blockade goes beyond the intents of Chapters III and IV, which affect third parties. A United States law has no jurisdiction over any foreign country in the world, including Cuba. Therefore, the grounds that support Chapters I and II are also illegal.

The main target of the intensified blockade has been external financing. Severing all Cuban access to sources of financing by international institutions or individual countries has become an obsession. As is well known, finance is the lifeblood of any economy. Without it, a country cannot exist. No one can imagine the abusive or risky conditions that Cuba has been forced to accept in order to receive loans. In its sugar industry alone the impact has been dramatic, with Draconian interest rates for loans, extremely short terms and ruinous repayment conditions.

We are not the only ones to say so. The head of the office for Cuban affairs of the United States State Department has said that

> "since the passage of the [Helms-Burton] law, 19 firms from more than six countries have changed their investment plans in Cuba or have pulled out their investments from that country ... The Cuban Government has encountered major difficulties in obtaining financing and attracting potential investors, and interest rates have increased up to 22 per cent"; moreover, "12 companies from more than seven countries are currently under investigation for their involvement in Cuba",

with a view to exerting pressure upon them.

The actual damage has been much greater than described by that United States official. The American World Health Association (AAWH), a recognizably independent non-governmental organization, submitted the findings of its year-long research on the impact of the blockade on the food and medicine sectors. The executive summary of this research, which was circulated in this Assembly, recorded in part that

> "the United States embargo has caused a significant rise in suffering in Cuba. For several decades, the United States embargo has imposed significant financial burdens on the Cuban health-care system. But since 1992, the number of unmet medical needs — patients going without essential drugs or doctors performing medical procedures without adequate equipment — has sharply accelerated ... The declining availability of foodstuffs, medicines and such basic medical supplies ... is taking a tragic human toll ... Finally, the AAWH wishes to emphasize the stringent nature of the United States trade embargo against Cuba. Few other embargoes in recent history ... have included an outright ban on the sale of food. Few other embargoes have so restricted medical commerce as to deny the availability of life-saving medicines to ordinary citizens. Such an embargo appears to violate the most basic international charters and conventions governing human rights, including the United Nations Charter, the charter of the Organization of American States, and the articles of the Geneva Convention governing the treatment of civilians during wartime."

I would add only that the United States Government, angered by this denunciation, fabricated a counter-report so gross, politicized and premeditatedly mendacious that it gave rise to complaints by United States and international agencies and was qualified in a document of the Congressional Ways and Means Committee as a deliberate attempt to cover up the charges made by the American World Health Association. The data on licenses granted for alleged trade with Cuba were altered, as was subsequently confirmed in reports from the Treasury and State Departments; statistics on trade with subsidiaries prior to 1992 were construed as being current; and companies such as Merck, and foreign and national individuals, were intimidated and sued.

Furthermore, the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization were misrepresented, since this counter-report concealed the fact that the

health-care share of blockaded Cuba's gross domestic product is the highest in Latin America and 34 per cent higher than that of the United States itself.

The congressional inquiry into this cynical counter-report concluded that

> "the State Department has the obligation to defend United States policy. But it does not have the obligation to purposely misrepresent the facts, especially if the misrepresentations and distortions are used to defend a policy of blocking" — note the acknowledgement of a blockade — "a civilian population's access to the basic necessities of life (food and medicine) in the midst of a severe economic crisis."

To go from bad to worse, only two weeks ago a United States ambassador was compelled to admit, impudently, to this Assembly that, since 1992, the United States had authorized over $2 billion in private humanitarian assistance to Cuba.

The information provided by various United States sources cites entirely different figures with regard to the licenses and supposedly authorized transactions included in the purported total of the $2 billion approved. At no time since the inception of the campaign to claim that the United States is the main donor of humanitarian assistance to Cuba has any United States official established the origin of this jumble of numbers, which fail to add up, or of the basis used by the United States Government to peg the Cuban-Americans' remittances at $2 billion.

The ambassador in question said that over $2 billion in private humanitarian assistance have been authorized for Cuba since 1992. He multiplied by 100 the humanitarian assistance sent by United States non-governmental institutions or individual Americans. In fact, even family remittances were banned throughout most of those years.

As Comrade Fidel said on 28 September:

> "Millions of people from all over the world send remittances to their relatives from the United States, Europe, the oil-producing countries, South Africa, Malaysia or any other country where they are working as foreign immigrants, and nowhere in the world have these remittances qualified as humanitarian assistance. That would be offensive to the senders and to the recipients' wives, children, parents, brothers and sisters.
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> "Virtually every third world country receives remittances from relatives in the more developed countries. Family remittances also exist among developed countries. If that is what they are alluding to, then it is a disgrace. The dictionary cannot be amended in this fashion."

The true figures of United States humanitarian assistance — which is not sanctioned by the United States Government — actually received by Cuba and carefully accounted for by us to the penny, are as follows: From 1992 to 1997, donations from the United States — with and without licence — amounted to $23,559,086. Of this, 98 per cent was contributed by non-governmental and religious organizations that have been repressed for challenging the blockade with their actions; 1.1 per cent was in individual donations by friends of Cuba; and 0.6 per cent came from private institutions.

However, the world saw political and police repression within the United States turned against a group of United States civilian and religious organizations led by Pastors for Peace, which, defying the blockade bans, tried to forward Bibles, medicine and medical and computer equipment to Cuba. Cuba challenges United States representatives to come here and tell the Reverend Lucius Walker and his associates, who were beaten by customs officers and who went on a long hunger strike a few metres from the Mexican border until their donations were released, that their cargo was licensed to be sent to Cuba. Let them come and tell us that the famous yellow bus, earmarked for the charitable activities of a religious centre and whose tires they punctured to prevent its passage through customs at Laredo, was a Government donation. Let them come and tell it to the international agencies to which they are heavily indebted and for whose contributions they are now trying to take credit in a sudden and false display of paternity. Let them come and tell it to the Cuban emigrants who, risking fines or imprisonment or paying exorbitant sums for the use of third-country banks, sent remittances to their relatives.

Over the last few days, United States Government spokespersons have been engaged in a campaign of accusations against us for refusing to receive emergency food assistance that, albeit channelled through the World Food Programme, would be identified, monitored and conditioned by the United States. To accept crumbs from our executioner while the blockade becomes increasingly tight and merciless would not be worthy of a dignified people. Jose Martí taught us that poverty passes, but dishonour does not.

As the Cuban Government recently stated once again,

"We shall not receive that unworthy and disgraceful assistance, even if clear of conditionalities. What we demand is an end to the blockade; if the blockade is lifted, we will not require any humanitarian assistance from the Government that has blockaded us for almost 40 years and has waged an economic war against us, concentrating all its influence around the world on this war."

In disregarding limits or laws other than its own imperial interests, the United States is placing itself outside of international law. One year ago, 75 sovereign States, representing nearly half of the world's population, were threatened with over 40 unilateral and extraterritorial measures not only at the federal level but also at the state level, which were similar to the Helms-Burton Act and the blockade against Cuba.

Over 20 new measures against Cuba designed to include the guidelines of the Helms-Burton Act in other laws are being considered, and some have already been adopted this year. These measures not only reinforce legal bans already in existence, but they also add new, hostile, extraterritorial measures whose adoption is facilitated by the diverse, obscure and manipulated manners in which they are presented and adopted.

In fact, last March, after His Holiness Pope John Paul II, during his visit to Cuba, condemned the blockade as an unjust and ethically unacceptable action, the United States bombastically announced an alleged easing of measures to provide access to medicines and food and to facilitate travel to Cuba and remittances to relatives of Cuban-Americans, who are also victims of discriminatory treatment. It must be noted that the announcement of these measures did not mean that the United States has reconsidered its attitude in any way. It was just a publicity stunt filled with such complex and obstructive procedures that even United States Secretary of State Albright could not but concede that the economic pressure on Cuba would be maintained through the blockade and the Helms-Burton Act.

Seven months later, we have seen nothing that would indicate the implementation of the measures announced. Three months ago, Cuba placed orders with 10 United States pharmaceutical companies, as soon as a flexible licensing system for drug sales was officially declared. Some refused to sell, and others have not replied. An application to hold an auction of United States pharmaceuticals and medical technology in Havana, which would have constituted a standard means to build trade, was also turned down.

But, assuming that the sale of medicine is indeed authorized, how can the purchase be made? What bank can be involved without seizing Cuban money? Where can a credit account be opened, and who would accept it? What access would be accorded to Cuban importers to check their purchase specifications in accordance with international practice? What aircraft or vessels would we use, and what port or airport? Who would be the insurer? With so many impediments, what American company would be encouraged to apply for a licence?

Furthermore, three months ago three charter flight operators were authorized to fly to Cuba, and two of them recently had their licences withdrawn. This is the bare, tangible and observable reality.

The United States has certainly designed a blockade that, like a vile medieval garrotte, has managed with slow and pyrrhic success to bring about innumerable shortages to 11 million human beings and has greatly hampered the country's normal development. However, it has failed completely in its objective of toppling the Cuban Revolution and inciting the people to rise up against its leaders and the political and economic system we have freely chosen.

Ever since its founding, the United States has entertained the idea of seizing Cuba. A long list of names, plans and files have haunted us for more than 200 years: Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, Monroe, Wood, Platt, Magoon, Crowder, Sumner Wells, Caffery, Mack, Torricelli, Helms, Burton and Graham, as well as nine successive Administrations since 1959, all of which have always made the same mistake: to think about, legislate for and dream of ruling Cuba in English, while Cuba is thought of, ruled and legislated by Cubans in our own creative language.

We have grown and acquired awareness, suffering since our infancy the aggressiveness, arrogance and blockade of a country that has never wanted to recognize us as a free and sovereign people and that still sees us as a fruit that is supposed to ripen and fall into its claws, submitting to its designs.

The sacrifices imposed have never detracted from our sense of solidarity or our concern for the future of humankind. Hence, for more than 30 years, almost half

a million Cuban university-trained professionals, teachers, cooperative workers and soldiers have shared in the suffering of other peoples and, feeling it as their own, have helped overcome it.

In the health care sector alone, over 26,000 Cuban doctors and paramedics have provided services in scores of third world countries. Recently, after hurricane Georges killed more than 150 people in Haiti, comrade Fidel proposed that, if a country such as Canada, which has close ties with Haiti, or France, which also has close historical and cultural relations with Haiti, or the European Union countries or Japan, contributed medicines, then Cuba would be ready to send all the doctors required to save 15,000 children under the age of five per year, and no fewer than 10,000 people above that age: that is, 25,000 Haitian lives. Let us speak of human rights not only in words but in genuine, human deeds.

On behalf of my fellow Cubans who defended independence and carried the light of knowledge through the lands of the third world, and those who at present travel through that neglected human geography in order to lay the foundations of health, asking nothing in return.

On behalf of 402 doctors in South Africa who did not need English in order to do their job, for they have been able to learn from and cure peoples and ethnic groups in their own languages and dialects.

On behalf of those who rushed to the aid of the victims of earthquakes and hurricanes, such as the Cuban medical team that is currently stationed in a remote, devastated area of the Dominican Republic.

On behalf of all the Cuban health care workers and doctors needed to save 25,000 lives in Haiti, who are ready to join a global effort sponsored and organized by the World Health Organization of the United Nations system.

On behalf of the millions of fellow Cubans who do not have access to important cultural, informational, scientific and technological products, which are deliberately denied them.

On behalf of our leukaemia and cancer patients, as well as our oncologists and surgeons who do not have access to Oncaspar, as I mentioned here a few days ago, or to permanent subcutaneous catheters or other similar treatments.

On behalf of our AIDS patients who have no time to wait for us to obtain their costly medication.

On behalf of the elderly people in our intensive care units who do not artificial respirators and therefore cannot enjoy the extended life expectancy offered by the revolution's health care system.

On behalf of the sick who require certain third-generation antibiotics that we cannot acquire because most of them are under United States patents.

On behalf of our heart patients who are deprived of Aprotinin, Captopril and other coronary drugs, or pacemakers.

On behalf of a child who was on the brink of death before the very eyes of researchers from the United States, as a result of a serious mycosis that we did not have the medicine to cure, which is produced in the United States.

On behalf of our children who are not immunized because of obstacles to the purchase of the raw materials needed to produce vaccines.

On behalf of our farmers and agricultural workers whose crops fail to thrive because of shortages of fertilizers and pesticides supplied in the past but denied at present by subsidiaries of United States companies.

On behalf of all those whose jobs and salaries have been affected by the closing of factories that lack spare parts or raw materials.

On behalf of the many Cuban immigrants to the United States who are opposed to the blockade and whose rights to travel to Cuba and to communicate with and freely help their relatives are trampled by the prevention or restriction of contact with family members and normal relations with their homeland.

On behalf of companies from various countries, such as Bayer, Siemens, Nunc, Telectronics, Vitalmex, and of United States corporations such as Cargill, Continental Grains, Bristol-Myers, Eli Lilly, Johnson & Johnson, SmithKline Beecham and many others, which have been forced to cancel their sales to Cuba or which, as a result of persecution and discouragement, are now afraid to sell there.

On behalf also of the noble people of the United States, who are being deceived when they are told that the criminal blockade is being carried out in the name of freedom.

On behalf of the doctors from the United States who are shocked to see such devastation, the businessmen from the United States who wish to conduct free trade, the farmers in the United States who need to seek new markets for their products, the cheated taxpayers and the scientists, artists, intellectuals and ordinary individuals who need to learn about and engage in peaceful exchange with Cuba and who are in disagreement with the brutality and obstinacy of their rulers.

On behalf of justice, truth and all our rights that are being flagrantly and massively violated, those rights to which we are entitled and which we are determined to defend as human beings.

On behalf of the dignity, decency and independent voice of our people, heroic a thousand times over, which, though it has sustained $60 billion in damages, has not been defeated, humiliated or brought to its knees.

On behalf of the 11 million Cubans who do not beg but rather stand tall and demand an end to this dirty war, and who do not accept assistance that dishonours them, for they know they can rise and walk the world on their own.

On behalf of many peoples that may be the next victims, today or tomorrow, I ask the General Assembly once again to be just, and with the power of right, with heart and with honour, to demand that the United States put an end to its cruel blockade.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): By reason of its history and its convictions, Mexico is a country committed to peace, justice and equality. The principles of the United Nations Charter and of international law constitute the fundamental standard of our conduct in our relations with other States. This is enshrined in the political Constitution of the Republic of Mexico. That is why Mexico has not promulgated or implemented extraterritorial legal provisions. My country has always rejected the use of coercive measures as a means of exerting pressure in international relations.

My Government reaffirms that measures such as the Helms-Burton Act and its negative consequences are unacceptable under international law and constitute a violation of the purposes and principles to which we all committed ourselves by ratifying the Charter of the United Nations.

In the past six years, the General Assembly has urged Member States to refrain from promulgating or implementing extraterritorial laws or measures. It will do so today for the seventh time. This appeal, which embodies the imperative of reason, law and ethics, must not remain unheeded. It is an appeal for the harmony that must prevail in relations among all members of the international community. It is an international call that goes beyond borders, cultures, creeds and sensitivities. We want to establish dialogue and understanding between two countries to which we are joined by firm bonds of friendship. Today, as never before in human history, the challenges of globalization make it clear that we will be able to progress towards higher levels of peace and development only if we do so together, in the context of genuine international cooperation firmly founded on full respect for the sovereignty of all the nations of the world without exception.

The embargo against Cuba must end. Let us join our wills together in order to overcome this unpleasant show of intolerance without delay, as it has no place in the new millennium that we must build together. Only if we are united, respecting our differences and enriched by our diversity, will we be able to make the hopes of the founders of our Organization a reality and gain access to a fully human world that is the concrete synthesis of our shared aspirations for peace, justice and equality.

In accordance with our unswerving, principled position, the delegation of Mexico will vote in favour of the draft resolution in document A/53/L.6.

Mr. Amihamzah (Malaysia): For six consecutive years the General Assembly has adopted resolutions on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba. The adoption of resolution 52/10 by the General Assembly on 5 November 1997 by more than two thirds of the Members of the Organization reflected the wishes of an overwhelming number of States. My delegation is confident that the overwhelming rejection of the unilateral embargo on Cuba will continue.

Malaysia fully subscribes to the final document of the twelfth summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Durban in September 1998, wherein the heads of State or Government of the non-aligned countries reiterated their call upon the Government of the United States of

America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial action against Cuba. These unilateral actions are contrary to the United Nations Charter and to international law. They run counter to the principle of sovereignty and have caused huge material losses and economic damage to the people of Cuba.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/53/320. Virtually all the responses of the 58 States and of the relevant organs and agencies of the United Nations system included in the report have called for an end to the unilateral embargo on Cuba. This clearly reflects the common view that the extraterritorial application of what is essentially a domestic law infringes on the sovereignty and legitimate interest of other States. This application is also clearly inconsistent with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

Malaysia firmly believes that there is no justification for the continuation of the unilateral trade measures against Cuba that also impinge on the right of other States to engage in free trade and navigation. The promulgation of the Helms-Burton law in the United States also contravenes the principles and objectives of the World Trade Organization. It creates a bad precedent which is detrimental to the promotion of international trade. The Helms-Burton law, whose extraterritorial effects, like those of the D'Amato Act against Iran and Libya, violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States affected.

In the interest of upholding the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the promotion of free trade and equitable economic relations among states, Malaysia will, as in previous years, vote in favour of the draft resolution on this subject that is being considered by this Assembly.

Mr. Isakov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): For the last six years the results of our discussion in the General Assembly on the item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" have been convincing proof of the international community's increasing opposition to the application of such unilateral coercive measures. Virtually the entire international community, including Russia views the continuing trade and economic embargo against Cuba as a manifestation of an outdated mentality of the era of bloc confrontation.

Russia, which has since 1994 consistently supported the resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", again proclaims the unacceptability of attempts to exert pressure on third countries in order to limit their cooperation with Cuba through implementation of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 12 March 1996. This Act is rightly described by virtually the entire international community as discriminatory and contrary to the norms of international law and the principles of free trade.

Maintaining the embargo against Cuba is counter-productive and is fraught with negative humanitarian consequences for the people of that country.

In our view, lifting the embargo and bringing about détente in American-Cuban relations would strengthen stability in the Caribbean, help to fully integrate Cuba into the world economic system and facilitate its progress in instituting democratic and economic reforms. In this connection, we would like to note that, despite their limited nature, we regard the measures announced on 20 March 1998 by the United States Administration to liberalize regulations on humanitarian assistance to Cuba as a step in the right direction.

In conclusion, I should like to reaffirm that Russia, guided by the principles contained in the draft resolution — that is, sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of trade and international navigation — firmly intends to continue to develop normal trade and economic relations with Cuba based on mutual interest and advantage and carried out in strict compliance with generally accepted international norms, without any discrimination.

Mr. Effendi (Indonesia): My delegation has in the past pronounced itself against the imposition of unilateral economic and trade sanctions. We hold these to be incompatible with the sacrosanct principle of sovereignty of States and their legitimate interests. This is the primary reason why various international forums, including our Assembly, have called for the repeal of the laws in question.

In this context, it is pertinent to note that the twelfth summit meeting of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Durban last month, called upon the United States to terminate the economic, commercial and financial sanctions against Cuba, which, apart from being unilateral and contrary to the provisions of the Charter, have resulted in immense economic damage and material losses to the people of Cuba. It also called for

negotiations on the basis of equality and mutual respect to settle differences with Cuba.

Pursuant to resolution 52/10, Indonesia has provided information to the Secretary-General reaffirming its consistent policy of strict compliance with the principles of equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in internal affairs, as well as freedom of trade and international navigation. In line with this policy, Indonesia has opposed the promulgation and application of any laws and regulations that have extraterritorial effect or impinge upon the sovereignty of other States and the lawful interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction which is incompatible with generally accepted principles of international law.

For these reasons, my delegation has decided to vote in support of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.6.

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam): For the last six consecutive years the General Assembly has consistently attached the greatest importance to the item on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

Viet Nam, together with many other Member States, has voiced its strong support for the draft resolutions considered and adopted by the General Assembly under this important agenda item. This stems from our strong support for the fundamental principles of international law that govern relations between nations and the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

These resolutions, especially resolution 52/10, adopted at the last session, reflect the deep concern of Member States and the international community as a whole and their strong rejection of policies that resort to the application of extraterritorial laws and unilateral coercive measures imposed by one State against another State. These policies run counter to the most fundamental principles and purposes of the Charter, most important of all the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, and violates the freedom of international trade and navigation.

Viet Nam joins the international community in demanding an immediate and total end to these extraterritorial and confrontational policies of embargo and blockade, which have been imposed upon the Republic of Cuba for the last 40 years. We also share the common desire of the international community to build healthy international relations and cooperation on the basis of equality and respect for the right of every nation to choose its path of development and socio-political system. Viet Nam earnestly urges the General Assembly and all other bodies of the United Nations to take concrete measures and necessary efforts to that end.

Viet Nam believes that the dispute between the United States and the Republic of Cuba should be resolved through dialogue and negotiations in the spirit of mutual respect and respect for the independence and sovereignty of States. We, therefore, welcome the efforts of the concerned parties in this regard.

The international community does not accept the application of blockade policies and measures by one country against another country to interfere in the internal affairs of States and violate their sovereign right to choose their own paths of nation-building and development.

As in previous years, Viet Nam will vote in favour of the draft resolution on this item. Reaffirming our friendship, sympathy and solidarity with the Cuban people, we call on other Member States to support the text; their positive votes will mean support for truth and justice.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/53/320 and its two addenda. I am equally grateful to the Cuban delegation for introducing draft resolution A/53/L.6, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

Zambia has traditionally voted in favour of draft resolutions on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. We are going to maintain our positive vote this year. Our vote in favour of the draft resolution is based on our adherence to the Charter of the United Nations. We believe that, in accordance with the Charter, it is crucial to develop and maintain friendly relations among nations based on the principles of equal rights and of the self-determination of peoples. We also feel that it is the duty of every nation to use the machinery of international cooperation to solve emerging problems between and among nations.

In Zambia's view, the provisions of the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act and of the 1996 Helms-Burton Act imply extraterritorial jurisdiction with respect to their application. This, in our view, runs counter to international law. We feel that it is wrong for any country in the world to attempt to apply and enforce its national laws extraterritorially. Indeed, no country has the right to coerce other nations or to impose its will upon them. Otherwise, there would be no sovereign equality of States, just as there would be no room for international cooperation.

Against the background of what I have just said, I would like to state that Zambia has not promulgated or applied towards any country any domestic laws that would imply extraterritorial jurisdiction. On the contrary, we fulfil in good faith the obligations we assume in international agreements and conventions. To the extent possible, we also strive to give the commitments we make in international agreements the force of national law.

Zambia is also committed to promoting freedom of navigation and trade. As both a transit country and a landlocked country, Zambia has consistently reaffirmed the right of landlocked countries of access to and from the sea, and freedom of transit through the territory of transit States by all means of transport, in accordance with international law. We are also committed to developing rule-based trade with all other countries of the world, as far as our national capacities to import and export allow.

Zambia and Cuba maintain very warm relations. The two countries promote bilateral cooperation in various fields of socio-economic activity. Our cooperation is monitored and reviewed through a joint Commission of Cooperation which meets in the two countries' capitals on an alternating basis. Through that Commission, the Zambian and Cuban Governments aim to progressively improve the welfare of their peoples and to help contribute to attaining the objectives of some of the major United Nations international conferences.

I am pleased to note that our relations with Cuba are based on mutual respect and the principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs. We believe that these values are part of the foundation on which healthy relations between States should be built.

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana): At successive sessions over the past six years, the General Assembly has adopted, by an increasing majority, resolutions requesting an immediate end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba. It is a matter of deep regret that the United States has not only failed to comply with these requests but has continued to defy the international community by passing amendments to various laws, aimed at tightening the blockade against Cuba.

The delegation of Ghana wishes to reiterate its rejection of the embargo on Cuba, and more particularly the enactment and enforcement of laws with extraterritorial effects which affect the sovereignty of other States and the legitimate interests of entities and persons under their jurisdiction, as well as freedom of trade and navigation. All such legislation breaches the norms of international law and runs counter to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

As is generally known, and as was described by His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Cuba this morning, the embargo has gravely impeded Cuba's socio-economic development and has exacerbated the plight of millions of Cubans, especially those in vulnerable groups, such as women, children and the elderly. In financial terms, the losses amount so far to over $60 billion, which is about three times the value of Cuba's gross domestic product.

Nor are the adverse effects of the embargo limited to Cuba alone. The extraterritorial nature of the blockade damages the interests of companies of third countries by depriving them of the profits they could derive from their transactions with Cuba. Even non-governmental organizations are threatened by the embargo legislation. In fact, the entire international community, including the United States itself, is being denied access to certain benefits available in Cuba in such sensitive areas as health care, as evidenced by the prevarications of the United States authorities over the issuance of a license in respect of a Cuban vaccine adjudged by the World Health Organization to be the best in preventing meningitis B.

We acknowledge the recent announcement by the United States Government easing some aspects of the restrictions, namely the resumption of direct non-commercial flights and of limited monetary remittances from Cubans to their relatives on the island. These, however, are only half-hearted measures which fall far short of the overwhelming demand for the complete lifting of the economic blockade.

Cuba has the right, under international law and under the Charter of the United Nations, to choose whatever political, economic or social system it wishes to

live under. No country has the right to seek to change that system through coercive measures. The fact that Cuba continues to survive in the face of these measures and to elicit so much support and sympathy from the international community is a sure indictment of the utility of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on that country by the United States.

Ironically, the embargo is also an indictment on the United States own proclaimed policy of promoting global free trade. We therefore call upon the United States once more to lift the embargo and resort to peaceful resolution of any differences it has with Cuba. A negotiated settlement is the only means of ensuring lasting peace and good neighbourliness between the two countries.

Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): God Almighty says in the Holy Koran:

> "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other)." *[The Holy Koran, XLIX:13]*

We know that knowledge is the first step towards confidence-building, and that confidence is the building block of cooperation among peoples. Such were God's injunctions, but those who think that they can play God on Earth are doing precisely the contrary. They act against the will of God by adopting practices which run counter to His will and commands. They impose blockades, embargoes and exclusion. At times they even launch wars to achieve their political and non-political interests, which they want to dictate to all peoples. They do not want these peoples to utter the word "no".

I am sure that God chose the geographic location of Cuba. Perhaps Cubans, had they had the choice, would have preferred to be located elsewhere.

I have a very precise and important question: why was it decided to impose embargoes and blockades on Cuba? Who has the answer to such a simple question? Does Cuba represent a threat to the United States? Does Cuba commit acts of aggression against the United States? Has Cuba tried to assassinate American leaders? History shows that the contrary is the case. My own answer to this question is the following: these decisions were made against the Cuban people because the Cuban people chose to say no to the political and economic choices dictated to it. The Cuban people made its own choice by itself.

The democratic and political choice intended to be imposed on Cuba is the subject of criticism all over the world today. Here I present evidence for this from articles published in the United States since at least 1992. Since 1992, that is to say after the collapse of world equilibrium, both *Time* and *Foreign Affairs* have published numerous articles which concluded that there is an earnest search for a voter-based democracy and not a representative democracy.

The same applies to the economic choice. Suffice it here to say that one prominent figure of the capitalist system here in the United States said a few weeks ago that he saw capitalism crumbling. We can see proof of this in the various economic crises in all the continents of the world, which have been caused by the capitalist system. Why, then, are we imposing on Cuba a political and economic choice at a time when both of those choices are being gradually proven a failure?

The Cuban people has its own choices. We must therefore respect its freedom. My country firmly stands in support of the Cuban people and its leadership, not only by voting for the draft resolution before us, but by continuing to stand by them always with steadfastness.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): Since 1992 the General Assembly has been considering the agenda item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", and its successive resolutions have called for ending the embargo. Although the call for ending the embargo has grown from 59 in favour in 1992 to 143 in 1997 — representing 77 per cent of all Member States — the continued consideration of this item this year reminds us that the appeal of the international community is still going unheeded. It is highly regrettable that, much against the will of the international community, the blockade continues.

During the first half of 1998 there were some signs of improvement in the relationship between Cuba and the United States — namely, the announcement by the United States Administration of a few measures aimed at re-establishing direct flights, and limited transfers of funds by United States residents to their families in Cuba and reducing restrictions for the shipment of humanitarian donations of medicines and foodstuffs to Cuba. The agreement allowing Cuban commercial airlines to overfly the territory of the United States was an encouraging development. However, the blockade continues to press hard on Cuba's socio-economic situation.

The United Nations Children's Fund, in the report contained in document A/53/320, states that the situation of children in Cuba continues to be adversely affected by a number of internal and external factors, including the embargo. The situation of services in the public health system is critical, and women's health services in particular continue to be in serious decline. The blockade against Cuba is indeed cruel and unfair. It is highly deplorable that innocent people are being victimized for reasons no longer valid and sound. The delegation of Myanmar has consistently expressed its opposition to the unjust economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed against Cuba, which has adversely affected every aspect of the lives of 11 million people.

In the interest of upholding the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and to demonstrate our solidarity with the people of Cuba during this difficult time, the delegation of Myanmar, as in previous years, will vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.6.

Mr. Mapuranga (Zimbabwe): My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement which will be delivered this morning by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Assembly is meeting for the seventh consecutive year to consider the item before us. For nearly four decades now, the Government of Cuba has been appealing to the international community to assist in ending this debilitating embargo that is deliberately designed to strangle its economy.

My Government is dismayed that we have no immediate solution to offer the suffering Cuban people today, but are here to take action on the same draft resolution yet again. My delegation has taken the floor on several occasions in the past and does so now to call for an end to this totally unjustified embargo that has crippled the Cuban economy and endangered the lives of many innocent people, including the sick, the elderly and children, who have had to bear the brunt of this arbitrary and vindictive act.

In this post-cold-war era in which the basic norms of international law and peaceful coexistence among sovereign and independent nations are being espoused and openly proclaimed, it is ironic that we are having to grapple with the most basic breach of these fundamental norms of international law.

What has become even more disturbing in recent years has been the extraterritorial character and impact of this blockade, which borders on interference in freedom of international trade and navigation by sovereign States. Since the United Nations itself has not seen fit or deemed it necessary to take any such action against Cuba, it is the view of my delegation that all countries should be able fully to enjoy their economic, commercial and financial transactions with Cuba.

The mere fact that one country stands in ever-growing isolation on this matter should be a clear indication that the international community no longer accommodates such interference. Today it is Cuba; tomorrow it could be any of our countries.

Zimbabwe, like other members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, is guided by the Movement's longstanding position that the international community should resist all forms of interference, intervention, economic coercion and other measures, including extraterritorial laws, against developing countries to prevent them from exercising their right freely to determine their own political, economic and social systems.

At their last summit meeting, held in Durban, South Africa, this year, the non-aligned countries once more called for the lifting of the embargo against Cuba. Zimbabwe fervently hopes that constructive dialogue will take the place of the existing confrontation in the handling of this matter.

My delegation will therefore take its consistent position of voting in favour of the draft resolution now before the Assembly.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which are Members of the United Nations.

We join with those Member States that have expressed the need to bring an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

CARICOM States wish to reaffirm the importance which they attach to strict observance of the principles of international law and to freedom of trade and navigation. We remain opposed to the extraterritorial application of national legislation which would seek to impose artificial

barriers to trade and which denies the sovereign equality of States.

In keeping with a policy of mutual respect, good neighbourliness and respect for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, CARICOM countries have sought to expand and strengthen their relations with Cuba and have sought to promote Cuba's gradual economic integration into the subregion through functional cooperation and trade.

We believe that a constructive process of dialogue would remove the dangers of tension and conflict in the Caribbean and would improve the prospects for peaceful development in our region.

Accordingly, CARICOM countries support the contents of draft resolution A/53/L.6 and will vote in favour of its adoption.

Mr. Al-Hitti (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is regrettable indeed that the international community, in the body of the General Assembly, is forced to keeping examining this item on the agenda, despite the promulgation and adoption of six successive international resolutions all calling upon the United States to end its economic, commercial and financial embargo of Cuba.

The votes in favour of all these resolutions by an overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership — what amounts to 77 per cent of the Member States — reaffirm once again the international community's firm refusal to accept these measures and its belief that coercive unilateral measures contravene international law, violate the principles of legal equality among States, and run counter to the principles of respect for the sovereignty and dignity of States. Since the effects of such measures transcend the boundaries of the State promulgating them, these measures also constitute gross interference in the internal affairs of the targeted State or States and of other, third-party States.

All reports submitted by Cuba, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations state that the coercive measures which are still being imposed by the United States Government against Cuba gravely endanger the health, prosperity and human rights of the Cuban citizens. This is because of the paucity of medicine and foodstuffs that the Cuban citizens need. The fact that the United States coercive measures have cost the Cuban economy more than $60 billion reveals the considerable damage inflicted upon Cuban citizens without any ethical or legal justification.

We can realize the gravity of these United States measures if we put them in the context of the current United States policy, which since 1992 has imposed 61 economic sanction regimes against other States. Currently — not caring in the least for the disastrous impact sanctions have on civilians or the damage these sanctions cause to its own interests — the United States is imposing or threatening to impose sanctions against approximately 75 States, where half of the world's population lives.

We agree that the simplest human right recognized internationally is the non-utilization of food and medicine as weapons to apply political pressure. By the same token, the first requisite of democracy is to listen to the opinion of the majority on any issue under discussion. This has not been done by the United States in these cases. This means that Washington has abysmally failed to respect these principles, by which the rest of the international community abides.

Therefore, once again from this rostrum we call upon the United States Government to desist from this harmful and unjustifiable policy and to pursue a new policy that encourages dialogue and ensures the sovereignty of international law and of the Charter of the United Nations as regards the principle of settling disputes by peaceful means and that of the freedom of international trade.

We are quite hopeful that we would not be dealing with this item again at the next session of the General Assembly after a positive response by the United States to the will of the international community and to its sincere desire to terminate the long-lasting suffering of the Cuban people — a suffering that has lasted for a very long time.

Mr. Jele (South Africa): This body is meeting once again to consider the draft resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

On previous occasions this Assembly made a sufficiently compelling case for ending the embargo by recording a majority of votes in favour of the draft resolutions before the Member States. South Africa had then hoped that this overwhelming rejection would prompt the United States of America to consider lifting

the unilateral and unjustified embargo against Cuba. It is therefore a matter of concern that since the adoption of all these resolutions this Assembly has not witnessed any movement towards compliance with its decisions. On the contrary, the United States has not only adopted new measures aimed at tightening the embargo but also continues with the application of the extraterritorial Helms-Burton Act, designed to punish third countries and nationals who are in favour of trading with Cuba.

The maintenance of the embargo and extraterritorial measures has created the inescapable perception that the United States of America is bent on imposing its will on Cuba and other sovereign States. It is therefore critical for the international community to act with more vigour to end the embargo, which is blatantly in breach of the principles of the sovereignty of States, freedom of international trade and navigation, and all the other basic norms governing international relations enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

My delegation believes it is essential for both parties to undertake measures aimed at settling their differences by means of dialogue and negotiation on the basis of equality and mutual respect. It is also important to note that a growing number of important role-players, public bodies and intergovernmental forums have expressed disapproval of these punitive actions. This opposition by a broad spectrum of international public opinion has been given added weight and significance by the decisions of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the involvement of many public figures of the United States itself, thus providing convincing proof of the urgent need for the United States to end the economic and commercial stranglehold on Cuba.

The Assembly has the responsibility to ensure that the unjust embargo is lifted so that the Cuban people can live under conditions which are conducive to their uplifting.

South Africa will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Khalil (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The United Nations General Assembly has been looking at the issue of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba for the last five years, and the Assembly has been calling for its end. Today my delegation would like to express its grave concern at the continuation of the United States embargo against Cuba and against other countries suffering from similar economic and commercial sanctions unilaterally imposed by the United States.

Recently the United States imposed on my country similar unjust measures as a means of pressure on us to take us off the road we had chosen to pursue to achieve socio-economic development. This constitutes a grave violation of international law and the basic rules governing international relations. It also adversely affects the various aspects of life in countries suffering from such measures. Therefore, the Sudan rejects the utilization of economic sanctions as a means of achieving political purposes.

All the reports prepared by the Secretary-General, including the latest, in document A/53/320 of 3 September 1998, have highlighted the devastating effects of the embargo imposed on the Cuban people, especially in the vital sectors of the economy, such as health and agriculture.

One of the root causes for instability in the world is the attempt by some to transfer a given democratic paradigm to developing countries without taking into account their cultural and historical circumstances. We think unilateralism, whereby coercive measures are imposed, leads to the following effects: it hampers the flow of international trade; it places hurdles in the road of transfer of technology to the developing world; and it leads to aggression against innocent people, such as that which one of the main establishments in my country recently suffered. All of this defeats the spirit of San Francisco whereby this Organization was created in order for peoples to practise tolerance and coexistence among all States. If this was the spirit 50 years ago, we have more need for that spirit now, given globalization and the interconnectedness of the world, to build a better future, one characterized by complementarity and constructive interaction among all.

The various resolutions adopted by the United Nations call for the various States not to promulgate any extraterritorial laws. This is why my delegation calls for the lifting of the embargoes imposed on Cuba and on all other countries which have suffered the impact of these unilateral decisions. My delegation reiterates its support for the draft resolution before us. We believe that all problems should be settled on the basis of equality among States, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): The agenda item before us deals with a subject which, regrettably, has preoccupied this Assembly for a number of years. As in previous years, the delegation of the

United Republic of Tanzania is taking the floor in support of the draft resolution accompanying the item.

It is our firm belief that the international appeals and efforts employed on behalf of the Cuban people are necessary, justified and urgent. For a number of years, the General Assembly has stressed to the United States the need to end the embargo it imposed on Cuba as a step towards normalizing her relations with Cuba. Unfortunately, the appeal by the international community seems to be disregarded.

My delegation is becoming increasingly concerned that, in spite of six resolutions adopted by the international community through this Assembly, the embargo imposed upon Cuba by the United States remains in place. This continuing state of affairs is disappointing for two principal reasons: first, because it suggests that the series of resolutions adopted by the Assembly are inconsequential, and therefore it is a challenge to both the authority of the Assembly and the Charter of the United Nations. Secondly, it is a matter of serious regret that the sustained status quo has contributed to a situation of real human suffering in Cuba as a result of the undue burden imposed on the Government of Cuba.

Only recently, we witnessed with sympathy the unfortunate manner in which the embargo worked to hinder international cooperation in the form of humanitarian response to the tragedy brought about by hurricane Georges to the Cuban people.

This Assembly has taken a firm position on the legitimacy of the Helms-Burton Act passed by the United States Congress. The legislation is devoid of any legality under international law. Its illegitimacy is rooted not only in its pretension to extraterritorial application, but also in the fact that it seeks to hinder legitimate international trade and cooperation. We continue to stand opposed to that piece of legislation. No country should be encouraged to pursue unilateralism at the expense of fruitful international cooperation, nor should such pursuit be condoned. Indeed, in the era of globalization such actions are counter-productive.

My delegation is further concerned that there have been no credible measures to bring the parties to a dialogue, notwithstanding the fact that the cold war is over. The burden which Cuba has endured is in the interest neither of the people of the United States nor of those of Cuba. Indeed, the continuing existence of strained relations between the two countries, with both of whom my country enjoys friendly relations, is not in the interest of any one of us, including the United Nations.

We therefore continue to call on the United States to end the embargo imposed upon Cuba and build meaningful bridges between the two States for mutual understanding and the prosperity of their respective peoples. This would indeed contribute to amity.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): We are meeting today for the seventh consecutive year to discuss the item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

The constant position of the Syrian Arab Republic has always been and continues to be the deep belief in the right of States to exercise their sovereignty over their territories and non-interference in their internal affairs. This right is enshrined in the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, which is the constitution of this international organization and its point of reference.

For four decades, Cuba has suffered social, economic and political damage at the hands of the United States of America that has been of grave concern to the international community. It is high time to find a solution to this serious stalemate. Cuba has repeatedly called for the blockade to be lifted through dialogue. We support its sincere desire to open a constructive dialogue with the United States, on the basis of equality, mutual respect and good-neighbourly relations, to resolve all differences between the parties and ensure the prosperity of the two countries and peoples.

When we consider the results of the voting on the resolution under this agenda item over the past seven years, we see that 59 States voted in favour in 1992, a figure that rose to 143 in 1997. The number of abstentions declined from 71 in 1992 to 17 last year. Clearly, international support for the General Assembly resolution under this item is inexorably rising. This offers striking testimony to the need to lift the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba and to respect the political, social and economic systems freely chosen by each State in accordance with its legitimate national interests.

This is also clear evidence of the world's exasperation with double standards, discriminatory

measures, non-responsiveness to the calls made by the General Assembly in its previous resolutions, and the flouting of these resolutions. We reaffirm that any decision whose extraterritorial effects may infringe upon the sovereignty of other States is in contravention of the principle of respect for State sovereignty, as set forth in Article 2 of the United Nations Charter. In this context, we reiterate the statement issued at the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Durban, South Africa, in September this year, calling on the United States to end this protracted blockade, which contravenes the United Nations Charter and international law. The continuation of the blockade and other measures imposed against Cuba have harmed that country and its people, especially its children, and widened the chasm between it and the United States.

Resolution 52/10, adopted on this subject last year with 143 votes in favour, is an important democratic indicator and should be a powerful impetus to the supporters of democracy to lift the embargo against Cuba. The international community has repeatedly rejected the American Helms-Burton Act, an extraterritorial law that flouts the need to respect the sovereignty of States which deal with Cuba. That law and other related legislative acts ignore the basic principle of respect for State sovereignty and violate the United Nations Charter and international law. It also impedes the freedom of international commerce and navigation sought by the United States. Furthermore, it contravenes the will of peoples.

My delegation will therefore support the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.6, now before the Assembly for consideration.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): The Government of Namibia will once again associate itself with the call of the General Assembly on States to refrain from the promulgation and application of laws and regulations with extraterritorial effects on the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, and the freedom of trade and navigation. In this connection, Namibia has not and will not promulgate or apply any laws or regulations against Cuba — or any other country, for that matter — that would prevent economic, commercial or financial activities from taking place between it and other countries.

The Government of Namibia views with great concern non-compliance with relevant General Assembly resolutions which seek to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States of America against the people of Cuba. In the same vein, Namibia views the Helms-Burton Act as a violation of the sovereignty of States, a breach of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, freedom of trade and navigation, and also as a violation of the international trading system. How can you talk of globalization while at the same time imposing limitations on the freedom of trade and investment?

Because of its full respect for the sovereignty of States and the principle of self-determination of peoples, and in recognition of the norms and principles which govern peaceful and friendly cooperation among nations, the Government of Namibia expresses its full solidarity with the people of Cuba and calls for the embargo that has been imposed on them for more than 30 years to be lifted.

The impact of the embargo is well documented and known. What one should ask now is: How much suffering must the people of Cuba endure before the lifting of this embargo? How many more lives should be lost through the unavailability of basic medicines and medical equipment before we heed the call?

The Government of Namibia reaffirms its commitment to the elimination and total lifting of the embargo against Cuba and will vote in favour of the draft resolution in document A/53/L.6, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*interpretation from French*): For seven years now, the General Assembly has felt compelled to consider the question of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. My delegation deeply regrets that the two parties concerned have not yet been able to resolve this question.

At the summit conference held in Durban, South Africa, in September 1998, the heads of State or Government of the non-aligned countries again called upon the United States Government to terminate the economic, commercial and financial measures against Cuba, which run counter to the United Nations Charter, international law and the principle of good neighbourliness and which cause material losses as well as considerable economic damage to the Cuban people. The United States is also asked to resolve its differences with Cuba through negotiation based on equality and

mutual respect, pursuant to the relevant General Assembly resolutions. In this context, the Lao People's Democratic Republic believes that it would be in the interest of peace and development in that region of the world, as it would be in the interest of both the American and the Cuban peoples, for the two parties to continue seriously their negotiations in order to resolve their problem as soon as possible, which would be in step with the current world trend towards dialogue and international economic cooperation.

My country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, has always opposed the taking of unilateral coercive and economic measures in international relations. The economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States of America more than 30 years ago has not only hampered the economic and social development of the island, but has also hampered trade and normal economic relations between Cuba and a number of other countries. On the basis of the principles of sovereign equality among States, non-interference in the internal affairs of others and freedom of trade and international navigation, the
Lao People's Democratic Republic believes it is high time the blockade was lifted and the two countries, the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba, improved their relations as soon as possible, which would help strengthen stability in the region and would assist Cuba, a developing country, to better integrate itself into the globalized and liberalized world economy.

Accordingly, the delegation of Laos wishes to express its support for the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.6, introduced by Cuba.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I call on the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on a point of order.

Mr. Ri (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Before we proceed to the voting, my delegation wishes to ask the Secretariat to make a clarification.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/53/320) contains the replies received from Governments as of 13 August 1998. My Government's reply to the Secretary-General in support of resolution 52/10 was dated 17 March 1998. However, my delegation could not find that reply in the report of the Secretary-General. So my delegation asks the Secretariat to reproduce the report of the Secretary-General so that it will contain the reply of my Government.

The Acting President: I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. His comments have been taken note of and the Secretariat will take the appropriate action to correct that omission.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/53/L.6.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote before the voting.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Manz (Austria): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union with reference to the draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

Let me reiterate on this occasion that with regard to Cuba, the European Union considers a process of transition to pluralistic democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as a sustainable recovery and improvement in the living standards of the Cuban people, as matters of priority. The European Union recognizes that some positive developments have taken place, but continues to be concerned about the political and economic situation in Cuba and expresses its hope for durable and substantive improvements.

The European Union considered both the visit to Cuba of Pope John Paul II and the release of political prisoners in response to the Pope's appeal as positive steps towards greater religious and civic freedom, and looks for this process to continue. However, we deplore the detention of a considerable number of people, including the four leading members of the Internal Dissidence Working Group, who have exercised in a non-violent manner their rights to freedom of expression and association.

The European Union emphasizes the fundamental responsibilities of the Cuban authorities regarding human rights, such as freedom of thought, opinion and expression, assembly and association, as well as rights associated with the administration of justice, and, in this connection, urges them to liberate and fully reintegrate into society all prisoners of conscience. We appeal to the Cuban authorities to fully cooperate with international human rights bodies and mechanisms.

The European Union acknowledges that steps towards better economic integration have been taken by the Cuban Government and stresses the need for a progressive and irreversible opening of the Cuban economy. The European Union reiterates its wish to be Cuba's partner in such a process. However, its full cooperation with Cuba will depend upon improvements in human rights and political freedom.

As expressed in the European Union Common Position of 2 December 1996, it is not our policy to bring about change by coercive measures with the effect of increasing the economic hardship of the Cuban people.

The European Union believes that United States trade policy towards Cuba is principally a matter for those two Governments. But the European Union has made clear its opposition to the extraterritorial extension of the United States embargo, such as that contained in the so-called Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996.

Furthermore, we wish to reaffirm that the European Union's strong opposition, based both on law and on principle, to the imposition of secondary boycotts and legislation with extraterritorial effect and retroactivity remains unchanged.

In November 1996 the Council of Ministers of the European Union adopted a regulation and a joint action to protect the interests of natural or legal persons resident in the European Union against the extraterritorial effects of the Helms-Burton legislation, which prohibit compliance with that legislation.

On 18 May 1998, at the European Union/United States summit in London, a package was agreed with regard to United States sanctions laws, including a commitment by the United States Administration to resist future extraterritorial legislation of this kind and an understanding with respect to disciplines for the strengthening of investment protection.

The European Union takes the view that this represents an important step forward towards resolving our differences with the United States on this matter. We emphasize, however, that the European Union's commitment to implementing the package must be matched by the United States. We look forward to further progress in this area.

For all these reasons, the member States of the European Union will unanimously support the draft resolution before us today.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Argentina wishes to express its concern over the persistent economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba, which affects the legitimate interests of persons and entities and undermines freedom and the flows of trade and investments.

Lifting the embargo is the best instrument for promoting freedom of trade, communications, flexibility and dialogue, including critical dialogue, and is the most viable means of promoting changes in Cuba towards representative democracy, which we believe is the system that guarantees the fundamental freedoms of citizens.

For these reasons, the delegation of Argentina will vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.6.

Mr. Valle (Brazil): I take this opportunity to reiterate the principles that have guided Brazil in its consideration of this issue, as we once again will vote in favour of the draft resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

The settlement of disputes between States must be undertaken first of all through peaceful means. Any other, forcible measures, such as sanctions or embargoes, which constitute exceptions to this general rule should be resorted to only when all other means have been exhausted and, in any case must, be solidly based on international law.

Sanctions and embargoes that contradict international law instead of contributing to resolving a specific dispute raise more tensions. If they affect the interests of third States, as in the case currently under the scrutiny of the General Assembly, the international community has even more reason for concern. The so-called Cuban Liberty and Solidarity Act in force in the United States of America has been rejected in a number of international forums, *inter alia*, the Organization of American States, the Rio Group, the Ibero-American Summit and the Latin American Economic System. It is also inconsistent with the legal obligations of the members of the World Trade Organization.

Brazil joins the near unanimity of the international community in rejecting this unilateral measure. Apart from the legal aspect, we do not believe it contributes to the goal of the full reinsertion of Cuba in the inter-American system.

Mr. Yu Qingtai (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The General Assembly has repeatedly adopted resolutions calling upon all countries to cease to implement laws that are contrary to the principles contained in the Charter and the basic norms of international relations or detrimental to the legitimate economic interests of third countries. It is regrettable that the Government of the United States of America has not responded positively to this appeal from the international community and has persisted in refusing to implement the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

The sanctions and embargoes by the United States over the years have created great difficulties for the Cuban people's endeavours to achieve economic and social development, as well as their restructuring process.

As a consequence, improvements in the living standards of the Cuban people have been hampered, with particularly harmful effects on the health and well-being of women and children. This is a clear violation of the human rights of the people of another country.

Furthermore, the unilateral actions by the United States have also obstructed normal economic and trade relations between Cuba and many other countries, causing damage to their legitimate rights and interests.

With the cold war now quite a few years behind us, this situation should not be allowed to continue. History has shown us that differences between nations can be settled effectively only through dialogue and negotiations on the basis of equality and respect for each other's independent choices. It is our hope that the United States will take constructive actions in line with the prevailing trend of our era.

On the basis of the foregoing, the Chinese delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Crighton (Australia): Although Australia shares the concerns of some Member States about the situation with respect to human rights and political freedom in Cuba, we do not consider that isolating Cuba through economic sanctions is an effective means of achieving human rights and political reform.

Australia has consistently expressed its principled opposition to the promulgation and application by States Members of the United Nations of laws and measures whose extraterritorial effects affect the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction and freedom of trade and navigation. In Australia's view, such laws and measures are not justified by the principles of international law. Australia is concerned about the unilateral, extraterritorial aspects of the Helms-Burton Act of 1996, which codifies and broadens the embargo by targeting foreign investors in Cuba.

For that reason, Australia will vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): The protection and promotion of human rights is a cornerstone of Norwegian foreign policy and a focal point of the dialogue we maintain with other countries. We deplore violations of civil and political rights and remain concerned about the situation in Cuba. We do not consider isolation through unilateral measures, such as the embargo under discussion, to be an appropriate response to the situation in Cuba. Norway believes that more is to be achieved through constructive dialogue in which no theme should be excluded. We are at present engaged in such a constructive and open dialogue with the Cuban authorities — a dialogue that includes a number of themes, *inter alia*, human rights.

The Norwegian Government believes there is a clear distinction between unilateral measures and sanctions adopted by the international community through the United Nations. Only sanctions adopted by the international community through relevant and representative organizations have the necessary legitimacy, and no country should impose its legislation on third countries. Therefore, Norway will again this year vote in favour of the draft resolution to end the embargo against Cuba, while, as stated, not in any way condoning violations of human rights in Cuba.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Costa Rica will vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.6, which calls for the lifting of the unilateral economic, commercial and financial measures against Cuba.

On this occasion, as in previous years, we base our position on unflinching support for the principles of non-intervention and respect for the self-determination of

peoples. Such principles constitute a cornerstone of the international system and are embodied in the Charter of our Organization. On previous occasions in this forum we have stated that Costa Rica rejects interference in affairs that are for Cubans themselves to resolve; only they should decide what to do.

As we affirmed during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, we may agree or disagree with what the Cubans have decided — or not decided — to do, but it is not for third parties to exert material pressure to alter the self-determination of the Cuban people, especially when such actions damage the very living conditions of the citizens of the island.

In this connection, I can also affirm that my country is not satisfied with the human rights situation in Cuba and does not agree with the policy implemented by the Cuban Government to limit the civil and political rights of the citizens of the country. However, Costa Rica does not believe that actions such as the so-called Helms-Burton Act, and other similar measures that involve the extraterritorial application of the legislation of a State, can be justified in the name of resolving the problems of Cuba.

We regret that an attempt is being made to limit international commerce and economic activities without valid justification and contrary to the legal structures on which the United Nations is based. That is why we join with those who believe that such unilateral actions must cease.

Mr. Ri (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is of the view that the continued blockade by the United States against the people of Cuba over the past 30 years is a violation of the agreed principles of respect for sovereign equality and non-interference — the very purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and other relevant norms covering international relations. Every country has the right to choose its own social system and mode of development. No country has the right to impose its will upon other countries. My delegation urges that the unreasonable and unjust unilateral blockade against the people of Cuba and other countries be immediately put to an end. My delegation will render its vote of support.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Republic of Belarus has always been in favour of strict compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In this connection, the Government of the Republic of Belarus supports the appeal of the General Assembly to refrain from the adoption and application of laws and measures designed to limit freedom of international trade or which affect the sovereignty of other States and harm the legitimate interests of juridical and physical entities or persons. The Republic of Belarus has always been in favour of the peaceful settlement of disputes between States through negotiation. In this connection, we support the creation of favourable conditions for the unlimited development of economic cooperation and other links between Cuba and all other countries, including the United States. We support the appeal of the international community not to adopt laws and measures aimed against other States. In this connection, our delegation will support the draft resolution that is before us in document A/53/L.6.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): Our concern with Cuba results from the Cuban Government's systematic denial of universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms to the people of Cuba. We are proud to promote and support democracy around the world; it is the dictators and repressers of human rights who should be defensive and ashamed.

Cuba continues to trample on the fundamental freedoms of its people, the rights and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United States believes that economic sanctions are an important foreign policy tool to be used in certain compelling cases. In the case of Cuba, sanctions are but one element of a broad policy aimed at promoting a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba. We have asked the international community to join us in a truly multilateral effort to achieve that goal.

Important issues are at stake for the United States in Cuba, which lies only 90 miles from our shores. But important interests are also at stake for friends throughout the western hemisphere and for the broader community of democracies.

Year after year the Cuban Government has manipulated the concerns expressed in this Hall to claim support for its repressive and failed policies. The record, however, is clear: dozens of dissidents and human rights advocates have been detained and arrested over the past year. Recently, the four courageous leaders of the "dissident Working Group" were charged with alleged sedition and acts against State security. Their only crime, however, was to criticize the Government's failed

economic policies and to call for peaceful democratic change.

Rather than accepting the mistaken premise of this draft resolution, the United States urges nations committed to democracy and human rights to join us in forging a multilateral effort to promote a peaceful democratic transition in Cuba.

In addition to maintaining pressure on the Cuban Government for change, the United States believes it is particularly important to reach out to the Cuban people. Assisting the Cuban people to develop independent civil society will help ensure that the transition which will inevitably take place in Cuba will be peaceful and democratic. This effort to support the Cuban people recognizes that change in Cuba must come from within, led by Cubans on the island who recognize the problems and injustices of the current system. They need and deserve the support of the international community.

Support for the Cuban people has been and remains a central thrust of United States policy. In October 1995 and March 1998, President Clinton announced measures which significantly expanded those efforts. Thousands of Cuban doctors, scientists, environmentalists, academics, students, researchers, artists, religious workers and others have travelled to the United States, and hundreds of Americans have legally travelled to Cuba for similar purposes. Dozens of non-governmental groups in the United States are engaged in projects with independent Cuban groups, and the United States has licensed over $2 billion in private humanitarian assistance from United States non-governmental organizations and individuals to the people of Cuba. Much of the assistance which has been and is being licensed is medicine, medical equipment and food.

With the support of countries that share our commitment to advancing peaceful change in Cuba, the Cuban people can nurture the hope of a brighter future. The United States calls on this body to dedicate its efforts to advancing the cause of freedom and human rights in Cuba and to increasing support to those on the island who yearn for democratic change.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.6.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

El Salvador, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Republic of Korea, Senegal, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uzbekistan

The draft resolution was adopted by 157 votes to 2, with 12 abstentions (resolution 53/4).

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Duval (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): Canada voted in favour of draft resolution A/53/L.6 because we firmly oppose the attempt by the United States to force sovereign States to change their politics towards Cuba by applying the so-called Helms-Burton Act to give itself extraterritorial jurisdiction through internal legislation.

That being said, the blockade applied by the United States cannot alone be held responsible for the difficulties being experienced by Cuba. We underscore today, as we have in the past, our concern with regard to the lack of respect by the Cuban Government for the rights of the Cuban population, and we continue regularly to raise our concerns in this respect in talks with the Cuban Government.

Mr. Arcaya-Smith (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Venezuela, in keeping with its constitutional principles of peace and peaceful coexistence among nations on the basis of respect for the norms of international law, once again rejects the application of unilateral coercive measures that violate sovereignty and affect the legitimate interests of entities or citizens under the jurisdiction of third parties and that undermine the rules of free trade among nations, as stipulated in the constitution of the World Trade Organization.

This position, which our country has maintained unchanged since 1992 in the General Assembly, has been reiterated on various occasions in forums and political mechanisms for consultation and accord, such as the Rio Group and the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State or Government.

In this regard, we wish to highlight that, at the twelfth summit of the Rio Group, held in Panama last September, the Heads of State or Government strongly rejected the unilateral and extraterritorial application of national laws, since this constitutes a violation of fundamental principles of international law and coexistence and have a negative impact on cooperation, trade and investments among countries.

In like manner, at the seventh Ibero-American Summit, held on Margarita Island in November 1997, the Heads of State or Government stated that they rejected the application of the law known as the Helms-Burton Act, since they considered that that legislation violates the principles governing international coexistence and runs counter to the spirit of cooperation and friendship that should prevail in relations among all members of the international community.

At a time when the international community is making progress in the search for new formulas of cooperation and understanding, it is inconsistent with reality to accept the resolution of bilateral differences through economic and military coercive actions or through any other form of pressure that undermines the sovereignty and independence of nations and is detrimental to peoples without affecting the regime against which they are imposed.

For these reasons, Venezuela, once again this year voted in favour of the draft resolution on this issue, on the basis of respect for international law. Our decision should not be interpreted as support for any regime in particular, since we believe that the arguments set forth are legitimate and apply to any political situation of any relevant country.

However, being a democratic, pluralistic nation that defends human rights, we wish at this time to repeat that Venezuela remains convinced that only through cooperation and dialogue will it be possible to bring about the necessary changes for democracy and fundamental freedoms, which we all desire.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): Japan shares the concern expressed by many other countries regarding the problem of extraterritorial application of jurisdiction, such as that arising from the Helms-Burton Act. My Government has been following closely the implementation of the legislation, as well as the circumstances surrounding it, and its concerns remain unchanged. Thus, having considered the matter with the utmost care, Japan voted in favour of draft resolution A/53/L.6.

I would like to take this opportunity to refer to the human rights situation in Cuba. My Government welcomes the release of prisoners, including political prisoners, by the Government of Cuba in March this

year, in response to the requests made by the international community, and most notably by the Vatican. But, with restrictions on political activities and on freedom of assembly, association and expression, there has been no fundamental progress towards democratization, the human rights situation or respect for individual rights. Japan remains concerned at the current situation and continues to hope that it will be improved.

While Japan supports the resolution, we believe it might be worth considering whether the United Nations General Assembly is in fact the most suitable forum in which to address this very complex issue. As regards the economic embargo by the United States against Cuba, Japan believes that it is appropriate for both countries to seek a solution through bilateral dialogue and thus calls upon them to strengthen efforts towards that end.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

May I take it that is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 29?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.